

THE MAMMOGRAPHY QUALITY STANDARDS REAUTHORIZATION ACT

• Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I rise today to celebrate the Senate passage of the Mammography Quality Standards Reauthorization Act (MQSA). It is timely and appropriate that the Senate took action on this important legislation in time for Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October and on the eve of the march against cancer right here in Washington. The bill that the Senate passed reauthorizes the original legislation which passed in 1992 with bipartisan support.

What MQSA does is require that all facilities that provide mammograms meet key safety and quality-assurance standards in the area of personnel, equipment, and operating procedures. Before the law passed, tests were misread, women were misdiagnosed, and people died as a result of sloppy work. Since 1992, MQSA has been successful in raising the quality of mammography services that women receive.

What are these national, uniform quality standards for mammography? Well, facilities are required to use equipment designed specifically for mammography. Only radiological technologists can perform mammography. Only qualified doctors can interpret the results of mammography. Facilities must establish a quality assurance and control program to ensure reliability, clarity and accurate interpretation of mammograms. Facilities must be inspected annually by qualified inspectors. Finally, facilities must be accredited by an accrediting body approved by the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

This current reauthorization makes some improvements to the current law. It ensures that women will receive direct written notification of their mammogram results. MQSA already requires written notification of mammography results to self-referred women. Now this provision will apply to all women. Women won't assume that "no news is good news" when this isn't always the case. They will know what their results are, so that they can get any follow up care they need. The Agency for Health Care Policy Research has cited studies that show that direct communication with patients, which is in addition to written communication to health care providers, dramatically increases compliance with follow up recommendations. Women are entitled to know the results of their exams. This new provision will ensure that women are informed and active participants in their health care decisions.

This legislation also allows the Secretary of Health and Human Services to establish a demonstration program for less than annual inspections for facilities that have excellent track records. This program will not be implemented before April 1, 2001, which is almost two years after the final regulations implementing MQSA go into ef-

fect. The facilities that participate in this program will continue to be inspected to ensure that they continue to comply with MQSA standards. A strong inspection program under MQSA is extremely important to assure the public that quality standards are being met. In a 1997 GAO report which evaluated the MQSA inspection program, GAO praised the program. I am very interested in the results of this demonstration. This demonstration program will provide us with an important opportunity to see if less than annual inspections are just as effective in making high-quality facilities comply with MQSA. It should allow the FDA to focus more of its attention on ensuring compliance with MQSA standards by facilities where problems have been identified in the past. The best way to protect the public health is for the FDA to focus its resources on the problem facilities.

This bill also contains a few minor changes to the law to ensure that: patients and referring physicians be advised of any mammography facility deficiency; women are guaranteed the right to obtain an original of their mammogram; physicians who review facility images on behalf of accreditation bodies are highly qualified and subject to high ethical standards; and both state and local government agencies are permitted to have inspection authority.

I like MQSA because it has saved lives. The front line against breast cancer is mammography. We know that early detection saves lives. But a mammogram is worse than useless if it produces a poor-quality image or is misinterpreted. The first rule of all medical treatment is: Above all things, do no harm. And a bad mammogram can do real harm by leading a woman and her doctor to believe that nothing is wrong when something is. The result can be unnecessary suffering or even a death that could have been prevented. That is why this legislation is so important. And that is why I am so pleased that this law is being reauthorized, so that we don't go back to the old days when women's lives were in jeopardy.

I want to make sure that women's health needs are met comprehensively. It is expected that 178,700 new cases of breast cancer will be diagnosed and about 43,900 women will die from the disease in 1998. This makes breast cancer the most common cancer among women. And only lung cancer causes more deaths in women.

We must aggressively pursue prevention in our war on breast cancer. I pledge to fight for new attitudes and to find new ways to end the needless pain and death that too many American women face. This bill is an important step in that direction.

As the 105th Congress comes to a close, we can look back on some great bipartisan victories and other great bipartisan frustrations. But one area Republicans and Democrats have always

worked together on is women's health. I am proud of this bill's broad bipartisan support. I want to take this opportunity to thank all 56 cosponsors of my MQSA bill here in the Senate for their support. I also want to recognize Congresswoman NANCY JOHNSON and Delegate ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON as the original sponsors of the House MQSA bill. I applaud the Democrats and Republicans of the House Commerce Committee, especially Congressmen BILLEY, DINGELL, BILIRAKIS, and BROWN for their leadership on MQSA. A special thanks also goes to Senator JEFFORDS for working with me to make reauthorization of MQSA a reality. As Dean of the Democratic Women, I want to also thank the Dean of the Republican Women, KAY BAILEY HUTCHINSON, for always reaching out to work together on the issues that matter most to American women and their families. MQSA is a shining example of what the U.S. Congress can accomplish when both Republicans and Democrats work together for the good of the American people.●

MR. OKTOBERFEST

• Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, while I was the mayor of Tulsa, we started an Oktoberfest to benefit the "River Parks" which is an area around the Arkansas River for jogging, cycling or walking. Tulsa Oktoberfest is known as one of the best in world and a large reason for that is due to Josef Peter Hardt, whom I dubbed "Mr. Oktoberfest."

Born in Oberhausen (Rhineland) Germany, Josef emigrated to Ithaca, New York in 1951 and moved to Tulsa in 1955. His professional career was in broadcasting, retiring as the manager of commercial productions of Channel 2 in 1993. His civic career consisted of work in the Theater Tulsa, television and film production, one founders of Tulsa's Oktoberfest, an active member of the German American Society Arts Association and German American Society Building Corporation in Tulsa.

Because of his active involvement in the German American Society, he was awarded the Bundesverdienstkreuz (Distinguished Service Cross) by the Counsel General for the Federal Republic of Germany, on the tenth anniversary of the German American Society of Tulsa. During that occasion, the Honorable Peter Maier-Oswald noted that "Joe Hardt has always worked for his old country and his new country to promote relations between the two."

Our first Oktoberfest consisted of a small tent on the banks of the Arkansas River in 1979 and now draws over 200,000 people over a four day period. Since the beginning, Josef, has held various jobs but perhaps the one for which he will be remembered most is that of MC. As this is the last year of his active involvement in Tulsa's Oktoberfest, I wanted to take this opportunity to commemorate his leadership and faithful service to his community.